

Passaic

by
Albert Weisbord

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PASSAIC

the Story of a Struggle

Against Starvation Wages

and for

The Right to Organize

Told by

Albert Weisbord

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SOLIDARITY FOREVER.

(Tune: John Brown's Body)

I

*The workers learned their lessons now as everyone can
see,
The workers know the bosses are their greatest enemy,
We'll fight and fight until we get a final victory,
In One Big Textile Union.*

CHORUS

*Solidarity Forever,
Solidarity Forever,
Solidarity Forever,
For the Union makes us Strong!*

II

*The men all stick together and the boys are fighting fine,
The women and the girls are all right on the picket line,
No scabs, no threats can stop us when we all march out
in line,
In One Big Textile Union.*

CHORUS

Solidarity Forever, etc.

III

*Policemen's clubs can't frighten us, for bullets we're not
scared,
They may trample down our women and our children
worse may face,
We shall show these textile masters that their slaves can
strike them dear
In One Big Textile Union.*

CHORUS

Solidarity Forever, etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE Passaic strike has marked a milestone in labor history. For now over thirty-seven weeks sixteen thousand textile workers, men, women and children, have waged a terrific struggle against one of the most powerful sets of employers in this country. Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Hungarians and Germans, all have stuck with unexampled discipline and firmness in the face of all the forces that the ruling powers of capitalist society can hurl against them.

How does it come about that unskilled foreign-born workers, so kicked and cursed not only by their masters, the capitalists, but by the lieutenants of their masters, the labor bureaucrats of the American Federation of Labor, could put up such a fight? How does it come about that these "unorganizables," in the eyes of A. F. of L. officials, could put up as their main demand the right to organize and the recognition of their organization?

The possibilities for the organization of the unorganized are greater at the present time than they ever were before. The reasons for this are very obvious:

1. The terrific obstacles which immigration put in the way of organizing are much less than before. In the first place, the new United States laws have produced a great fall in the immigration of this country. Before the passage of these laws, each year would see hundreds of thousands of new and helpless workers dumped on our shores. No sooner had these workers settled down when a new batch of immigrants would come in and upset everything. Now, with this confusion lessened, the foreign-born workers have been able to settle down more, to get to know

each other and to learn the English language. A greater spirit of solidarity has arisen. Besides, many of those now working in the mills are the children of those working before the war. These children, all of them, speak and write English. They are living links that bind their parents to all the other workers in the mills. The workers are not such easy prey to racial and religious prejudices.

II. The World War and its aftermath have changed many things. Many workers went to fight in the United States Army. The soldiers learned English. They also learned that the talk about "democracy" and "liberty" was bosh. They came back thoroughly disillusioned. They have a different spirit now—a harder spirit. They are no longer the same cowed and meek workers. They feel they are capable of deciding things for themselves and are not afraid to fight to get what they want. In the second place, the war has given the unskilled a taste of better wages than they ever had before. During the war, the foreign-born, unskilled workers were closer to the native-born skilled workers in their standards of living and in their tastes. It was the unskilled workers who gained most in the wage increases which then were given.

This levelling process increased after the war by virtue of the drives of the bosses especially in the textile industry. The union, the Amalgamated Textile Workers, was smashed, and the wages both of the skilled and the unskilled were cut equally. Hours were increased for all. Increase of speeding-up and unemployment affected every one. Further, the introduction of ever new machinery tended to throw many skilled workers, their security and privileges gone, into the ranks of the unskilled. With craft prejudices hammered out, all workers became part of one class, but a class that had had a taste of some of the good things. To go back to lower standards was hard

enough for the older folks. For their children, brought up and raised in America, it was unthinkable.

III. The Proletarian Revolution in Russia has changed many more things. Some of the European immigrants who are allowed to come over are much more radical than before and help rather than hinder organization work. The reverberations of the revolution have made themselves felt among the ranks of the unskilled in every industry in this country. There is a confidence, a steadiness among the workers, a deep feeling of power that could come only from seeing and feeling that part of their class had seized the reigns of power over one-sixth of the globe and was leading the world toward emancipation.

IV. From out of the ranks of the workers, leaders have arisen who will not repeat the errors made by militant fighters before. The working class has a long memory. It has learned from the strikes and struggles of the past. There has come into existence a militant and progressive Left Wing movement. It stands for the class struggle and for the united front of the workers against the united front of the bosses. The Left Wing program calls for the amalgamation of all unions in a given industry into one union affiliated to the American Federation of Labor. At the same time, and in order to accomplish this unity of the workers, the Left Wing has declared war against those labor officials who constantly divide and betray the workers.

And in the very heart of the Left Wing is now an entirely new factor, namely, a growing and developing Communist Party. This party, with its network of speakers, press, fractions, shop nuclei is the very soul and driving force of the movement. It is able to co-ordinate all phases of the movement and focus all forces till victory is assured. Here is a factor in American life that is unconquerable.

Yes, the days of America before the war are gone.

We are in the era of imperialism, in the era when imperialist America has the hegemony of the world. Its capitalists are the wealthiest, its industries are the greatest. Outside of Soviet Russia there is no country that does not find itself forced to pay tribute to it. And yet the wealth of America is the wealth of a ghoul that has robbed a corpse. Plundered and destitute Europe can furnish no permanent market for American products. To exist at all, Europe must unite in order to compete with America and therefore America is compelled to retrench in order to keep control. America will find it more and more difficult to continue to bribe its skilled workers with Ford cars or with a relatively high standard of living. The unskilled will be pushed very hard. These workers have already begun to feel the pinch. They want to fight back. They are ready to be organized.

The real importance of Passaic is that there are many Passaics. America is virtually built on Passaics, not only in the textile industry, but in every basic and heavy industry in this country. Passaic fundamentally is little different from Lawrence, Paterson, Perth Amboy, Bayonne, Akron, Youngstown, Gary, and a host of other highly industrialized cities, where the stuff vital to the nation is produced. The monstrous exploitation, the terrible brutality that characterizes Passaic characterizes them all. The struggle of the Passaic workers, therefore, symbolizes the sufferings and determination not only of these workers, the million unskilled and oppressed workers in the textile industry, but the twenty-eight million in the other industries the country over.

The very length and stubbornness of the fight mirrors the meaning of the Passaic strike. It falls like a shadow in the path of the American imperialists. It is the shadow of Labor bestirring itself, Labor awakened, Labor organized, Labor fighting the class struggle in America.

CHAPTER II.

The Drive of the Capitalists Against the Workers.

THE year of the sesqui-centennial of America's first great strike—the American Revolution—found the workers paralyzed and betrayed. Since the war the capitalists had struck blow after blow while labor, bound hand and foot by its officials, was defeated in most of its great struggles.

The enormous power gained by American industrialists during the war was quickly turned against American labor. First, the post-war militancy of the workers was crushed in 1919. The loss of the great steel strike marked the end of that period. Then began the steady smashing of unions till from over 4,000,000 in the A. F. of L. less than 3,000,000 remained. The many unskilled workers who had joined unions were abandoned. Those who were not abandoned were sold out by their union officials. The "hunger cure" given the workers during 1920-1921, was followed by the wage-cutting campaign of 1922. It started in the textile industry and quickly extended to other industries. During this campaign it was apparent that imperialist America meant monopoly America, centralized under the control of the general staff of American financiers.

Then came the surprise. In spite of the fact that the textile workers had no strong union and had been sorely tried by the depression of 1920-1921, yet with the wage cut of 22½% in 1922 came a spontaneous textile strike. It was the first sign that the workers were no longer the docile slaves of pre-war times. It lasted for over five months. The militancy and stubbornness of the struggle took the bosses by surprise.

They began to retreat. In many places the former conditions were restored. The battles of the miners and of the railroad men added an extra stimulus to the movement. The unorganized and militant sections of the workers had saved the day.

Everyone looked to the A. F. of L. leaders to do something. Industry was good. The workers were ready to take the offensive. But the A. F. of L. officials did nothing. The workers grew discouraged and pessimistic. Everywhere the workers began to lose. The capitalists regained lost ground and prepared for their next attack on the wages, hours and conditions of the workers.

When the bosses want to make wage cuts they usually start in the textile industry first. This is so for many reasons:

1. The textile industry is the oldest large industry in America. The textile capitalists, united in their powerful combines, have a history, a dignity, and an experience unsurpassed anywhere. They know how to handle men and strikes.

2. The textile workers are unorganized. Of the 1,000,000 workers, scarce 5% are organized or, rather, disorganized, in a dozen or so different unions, each small and futile, each fighting the other. To make matters worse, most of the workers, except those in the south, are immigrants, many of them intensely exploited women and children. Resistance is made still more difficult by the fact that about 200,000 workers find themselves more or less permanently unemployed. There is a consequent competition and struggle among the workers themselves for the available jobs. Destitution and extreme poverty are widespread.

3. Strikes in the textile industry would not affect American hegemony, which is based on the basic stuff of a heavy nature—iron and steel, coal and oil, etc. At the same time it would be a good basis on which

to proceed to cut the wages of all the workers of the country.

So in 1924 the attack again started in the textile industry. But this time the master class had learned the great lesson of 1922, namely, that it is not enough merely to have a centralized attack. In 1922, entirely underestimating the forces favoring the workers, the employers had cut wages of all of the workers simultaneously all over the country. This time the campaign was much more carefully planned.

In the fall of 1924 they started with the cotton workers of New England. Very cautiously wage cuts were extended mill by mill. Not all the mills of a given district or even of a given city would be affected at any one time. Nor would the cut be made at once for all the workers in a mill. Instead, the cut would proceed from department to department. Thus the resistance of the workers never was aroused in an intense manner on a large scale and any outbreak could be quietly throttled. Within a few months all of the cotton mills of New England had made a wage cut of 10% and the movement was progressing to the woolen mills in the same manner.

Simultaneously there began a drive in the cotton mills to speed up the work. In many places as much as one-third of the help was displaced and put on the unemployed list or given part-time employment while the others did the work all had done before. Soon this speed-up campaign too was successful and was then continued in the woolen mills, while the wage-cutting part of the campaign, being over for the time being in New England, moved south into the Middle Atlantic states.

Nor was the silk section of the textile industry ignored. With the success of the bosses in the cotton and wool sections there began a drive against the standards of the silk workers. In Paterson the silk workers resisted but were defeated.

By the end of 1925, one year after their campaign had started (note the difference in tactics since 1922; note how mature and how flexible they now were), the mill owners began their campaign against the forty-eight hour week. The bill for a forty-eight hour work week for women in New York State was defeated by the great lobby of the textile barons. The secretary of the Cotton Manufacturers' Association openly declared, in a statement printed in the New York Times, that the New England cotton mills could not meet competition with the forty-eight hour week and would begin a drive to lengthen the work week. A lobby has been formed in Boston to repeal the 48-hour law there. And all this is done in the face of tremendous profits by the textile bosses.

The workers in the industry became restless. But the A. F. of L. did nothing. The Paterson union was temporarily crushed after the strike in 1924. Gloom hung deep everywhere. The unskilled workers, betrayed and helpless, felt they were defeated.

Then like a flame in the dark came the Passaic strike. A leadership had at last appeared that dared to fight. If the officials of the A. F. of L. did nothing, the Left Wing itself would undertake to act. The Communist Party, always in the forefront of Labor's battles, fighting in the every-day struggles of the workers, lent its full support at once to the strike.

The gray clouds melted at once. The clean, courageous, virile, working class stood ready to do battle. The fighting leadership had expressed the deepest needs of the workers. Dumb and inarticulate, the workers had waited for some one to express their need in words, to guide them and to lead them into battle. The whole working class, with a cry of joy, took up the challenge of the textile mill owners. As one man they rallied to the embattled Passaic strikers.

The issues were clear. Passaic was typical. Should

Passaic win, the whole working class, those working in the basic and heavy industries of the country, would be saved wage cuts and longer hours. Against the fabulous wealth and power of the capitalist-financiers of America—the richest in the world—these workers pitted their solidarity.

"The United Front of the Workers!"

"Fight Wage Cuts and Longer Hours!"

"Organize the Unorganized!"

"Trade Union Unity—Amalgamation!"

These were the slogans raised. With unmatched courage and enthusiasm, with discipline and determination, troops after troops marched into line and into action. The battle was on.



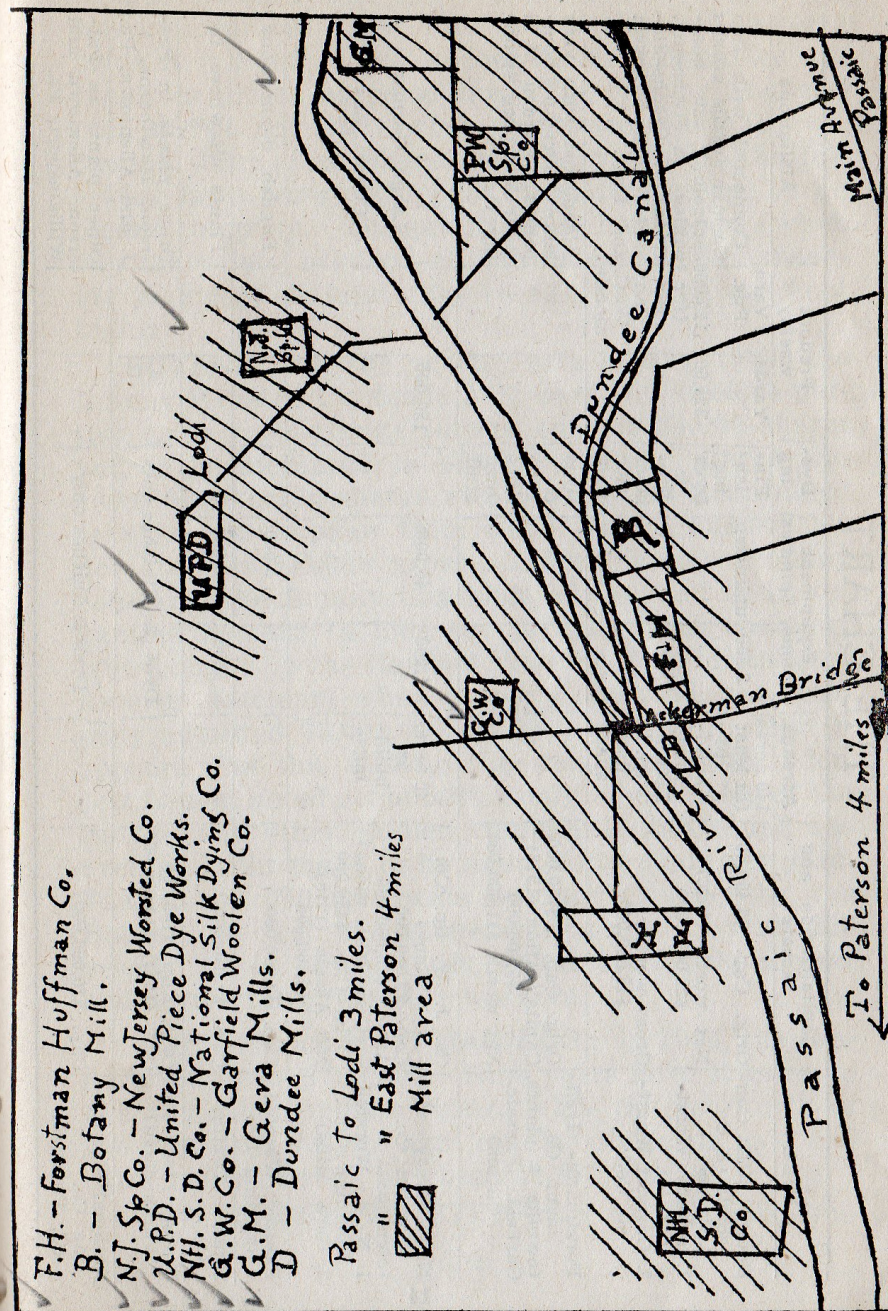
CHAPTER III.

Passaic—A Challenge to Labor.

PASSAIC is the heart of a highly industrialized area in the northern part of the metropolitan district of New Jersey. To the north of it lies the city of Paterson, silk center of the country, with a population of nearly 150,000. Around Passaic proper there cluster four or five smaller towns and cities, Clifton, Garfield, Lodi and Wallington, hardly to be distinguished from Passaic and making with Passaic an industrial district of close to 150,000. In this district the chief manufacture is that of fine woolens and worsteds, cloth ranking among the world's best.

Most of the mill owners are German. They came to Passaic when the McKinley tariff of the nineties and the Dingley tariff of the beginning of this century made it very profitable for foreign makers of fine goods to manufacture in the United States. Besides, by coming to America, the "land of the free," these German owners could escape the labor and social insurance laws that the German trade unionists and socialists had compelled the government of the Empire to enact.

America proved to be a golden land for them. The little town of Passaic became a roaring industrial center. The mills grew by leaps and bounds. Along the Passaic river and its tributaries for miles and miles they stretched. The following table and map shows the great power of the mill owners and the extent of their mills. It was indeed a far-flung battle front that the strikers had to form later on.



THE CHART

MILL	Capitalization and Assets	Acreage	Looms	Equipment Spindles	Dyeing	Product weekly	Affiliations
Botany Mills Consolidated Co. (owning 3 plants, Garfield, Passaic, Clifton)	Orig. Cap. \$3,400,000 Net worth (1926) \$28,000,000 Gross worth \$48,000,000	140 acres (at least 108 buildings 2,500,000 sq. ft. floor space)	3,200	unknown	Finishing? Dyes & Finishes own stuff	Yarn Pds. 125,000 (for Botany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Holland, Latvia, W. C. and Italy)	Connected with two German textile groups controlling 30 companies in Germany, Botany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Holland, Latvia, W. C. and Italy.
Forstmann-Huffmann Co. (owning 3 plants, Garfield, Passaic, Clifton)	Orig. Cap.\$750,000 Capitalization (1913) \$5,500,000 Net worth \$11,000,000				Dyes & Finishes own stuff		Connected with very large German companies. Werden A m Ruhr Augsburg Spinning Co.
New Jersey Worsted Co. (owning: 1. N. J. Worsted Spinning Co. 2. Gera Mills)	(N. J. W. Sp. Co. alone) Cap. \$2,000,000 Assets \$16,000,000 (Gera Mills alone) Orig. Cap. \$450,000 Net Assets (1919) \$2,500,000	40 acres 53 buildings	1,200	40,000		180,000	Large German Connections
Passaic Worsted Spinning Co.	Cap. \$3,000,000			5,000			English connections
Dundee Textile Co.	Cap. \$1,050,000		500	6,000			Plants elsewhere in U. S.
United Piece Dye Works (Lodi)	Orig. Cap. \$100,000 Cap. (1913) \$10,000,000			Dyes & Finishes only			Other plants in Paterson, Hawthorne, N. J. and Allentown, Pa.
National Silk Dyeing Co. (C. Paterson)	Cap. \$10,000,000			Dyes & finishes only			Other plants in Paterson, Allentown and Williamsport, Pa.

The profits made, augmented by a tariff of 78%, were enormous. Just how much the mill owners made it is hard to tell. Most of the companies are family or closed corporations. The regular financial manuals do not show what profits were actually extracted. But after diligent search by experts the following facts were obtained. These figures are by no means complete. The profits must have been (when one takes into account all the fixing and bookkeeping jugglery) at least fifty to one hundred per cent higher.

BOTANY: In the seven years ending 1923, the Botany Worsted Co. made 93% annually, besides putting aside such a huge surplus that its 34,000 shares had to be increased to 479,000 non-par shares and 100,000 preferred shares at \$50 each and guaranteed at 8%. Assets grew from \$3,500,000 to \$28,000,000 net and \$48,000,000 gross. Indeed, a new holding company, the Botany Consolidated Co., had to be organized in 1922 to hide the profits. This company later bought up the Garfield Worsted Co. In 1925, by its own statement when properly analyzed, the company admitted \$5,000,000 or 20% net profit. But it appears that this was not the real sum either. Mr. Jett Lauck, noted economist, analyzed the sales of the Botany and other woolen companies, and found the average profit made to be about forty cents per yard. Taking the 350,000 yards produced weekly by the Botany, we get the stupendous profit of \$130,000 weekly, or in other words, about \$6,750,000 a year had been wrung from the workers.

FORSTMANN-HUFFMANN CO.: In 1904, the capitalization was \$750,000. Nine years later it grew to five and a half million dollars while the net worth of the company, despite high regular dividends paid and extra melons sliced, had become \$11,000,000.

NEW JERSEY WORSTED CO.: In 1922 this com-

pany was able to buy the Gera Mills also, which had made for the past sixteen years an average of 53% profits according to its own statements. In 1926, the profits were so large that the company was able to pay off a mortgage of a million and a half dollars which was due ten years hence.

UNITED DYE PIECE WORKS: In 1903 this company was capitalized at \$110,000. By 1923 this had grown to \$10,000,000.

All the other firms involved in the strike show the same history. These tremendous concerns—how were they built up? These enormous profits—how were they made? Only through the most ruthless exploitation imaginable. Conditions abolished in other nations long ago still prevailed in Passaic. Oh, the sweat and blood; oh, the lives, the noble lives, of how many of the working class went to create those fortunes! The workers, helpless, betrayed, crushed, enslaved in this new feudalism that had arisen, paid with their very lives.

What were the wages? Before the wage cut came, in 1925, over 70% of all the workers received for full time work \$12 to \$24 a week. The average for women was \$17, the average for men \$24. But this meant full-time work and in 1925 there was much part-time unemployment. Thus, during that year, over 75% of the workers made less than \$25 a week.

On top of all this, in October, 1925, there was decreed a wage cut of 10%. Thus, in the face of a rising cost of living which made a wage of \$35 to \$40 absolutely imperative, over 85% of the workers were forced to work for less than \$25 a week!

But figures alone cannot tell of the bitter exploitation inside the mills. A regular goose-step discipline was imposed. Even the Alien Property Custodian, who took over the Botany and the other German-owned mills during the war, was forced to report on the "Prussianization" of the workers in the mills.

The workers were paid by the hour or by the piece. No one knew when he or she would get home. Long overtime would alternate with part-time work at a moment's notice. Home life of the workers was broken up.

The low wages paid meant that everyone in the family over 14 years of age had to work. The textile industry is a "family" industry. Passaic tops the list of all the cities in the country for continuous child labor, it being found that 75% of all children working received permits at the age of 14 years. Fifty per cent of the workers are women. The men worked during the day. The women, many of them young mothers, worked at night. What this night work meant for the women and for the workers generally is indescribable.

The women, some of them pregnant, would work eight and ten hours at night, standing continuously during this time, sometimes with no rest at all. Coming home in the morning, exhausted by this cruel siege in the mill, they would have to do all the wearying tasks of the home. Four hours sleep, snatched amid the clamor of the children and the street noises outside, would be the maximum daily rest these women would get. Most of them strapping women of peasant origin, there were, nevertheless, cases of nervous prostration among them due to this inhuman strain. Home life became a mockery, children grew up neglected and sickly.

The workers were dumped all together in the slum section of the city. While 10% of the people in Passaic spread themselves over half the city, half of the population—all workers—are forced to live in but one-sixth of the area of the city. Here disease and vice flourished. From personal observation and investigation, the writer knows that three-fourths of the inmates of the county jail in Paterson came from

the Passaic district, although many more people lived in Paterson.

The 48th annual report of the Department of Health of New Jersey for 1925 showed that the death rate of infants under one year of age in Passaic was 43% higher than for the rest of the entire state. In the age group 1-5 years, the rate was 52% higher as it was also in the group from 5-9 years. Passaic was the "white hearse" city of New Jersey.

The death rate from tuberculosis, very high in textile centers anyway, was almost 6% higher for Passaic than for the rest of the state. Heart trouble, poisoning, anemia, diseases of the digestive organs, all cut down the Passaic workers. And no wonder. The Passaic textile barons violated all decency and law in exploiting their slaves. Dust, steam, fumes, heat, bad air, dampness, wet floors, no seats, open troughs for the workers instead of toilets, speeding-up, long hours, exhaustion, night work, aye, all those things and more made possible the flourishing business of churches, undertakers and cemeteries in Passaic.

But worse than the physical tortures imposed on these slaves were the mental tortures, the kicks and curses that day in and day out broke the spirit of the workers inside the mill, the fear of the elaborate black-list and finger-print system instituted by the mill owners, the terror and hatred created by the far-reaching system of labor spies and thugs hired by the employers. Every device possible was used to divide and crush the workers.

The mill owners went to the extent of employing a man at Ellis Island for the special purpose of getting as many different nationalities and tongues into Passaic as possible. And when the school authorities in Passaic in 1919 innocently wanted to teach these foreigners English—since 25% of all the workers could not speak or read or write English, making

Passaic the third highest city in the country for illiteracy—the textile barons put such pressure on the school authorities and such fear into the workers that the plan had to be abandoned. The bosses were afraid of the Bolshevism and unionism following if the workers should all speak the same language—English.

Hand in hand with this industrial despotism went political despotism. This must be so always. The master class controls everything, police, courts; the whole political and state power is in its possession and under its control. In Passaic church propaganda was directly paid for by the mill owners. Union organizers were boldly flung out of the city. Civil liberty was denied them. The only trouble was that the workers did not yet fully understand this relationship between the boss and the state. But workers learn fast during strikes, as we shall see later on.

There had been previous attempts to form a union in Passaic. The W. I. U. and the I. W. W. had tried in 1912; the Amalgamated Textile Workers in 1919 and 1920. But all had failed. However, the workers had learned the lesson that comes from winning strikes and allowing the boss later to smash up the union. They were ready now to fight and fight hard for a union.

In 1925 there were no textile unions at all in Passaic. The field was clear. The officials of United Textile Workers, the textile union of the A. F. of L. were content to accept money from the mill owners so as to advertise these concerns in union magazines! Such were the "bona-fide trade union leaders" in the American Federation of Labor.

These, then, were the objective factors leading to the great Passaic strike. All that was needed was a spark to set fire to the inflammable material. All that was needed was the subjective element necessary to every struggle, namely, the will to fight, the will to

struggle, the will to organize on the part of the masses.

And soon there came an event that easily aroused this will to fight on the part of the workers. The mill owners, after giving the workers a few months part-time work, the "hunger cure," decided to cut wages 10% in October, 1925. Useless to plead the rising cost of living during the winter, useless to plead the already low wages. The capitalist general staff had decreed wage cuts in the entire textile industry and it was now Passaic's turn.

But the masses could not fight without leaders. There was no union. The A. F. of L. leaders simply laughed at these "unorganizables." Who would help?

At this moment the militants and Communists in the mills stepped into the breach. They took the initiative in forming mill councils as a skeleton organization. Certain of the support of the Left Wing of the whole labor movement these militants proceeded to throw into the teeth of the textile barons the challenge which a consistent campaign of wage cuts and lengthening of hours had driven to the tongue of every man and woman employed in the industry. United Front committees were formed which elected Albert Weisbord as their leader and spokesman.

For a long time the Left Wing, the militant section of the workers in America, had seen the necessity of organizing the unorganized. The unions under the rule of the labor bureaucrats and fakers were growing weaker in numbers and dead in spirit. To organize the unorganized would not only protect the unorganized, it would build the unions. Nay, more, it would revolutionize them. The fakers would be overthrown. The deadening spirit of class peace would be gone and the unions would take their rightful place in the struggle for their complete emancipation.

Further, the left wing saw that it and it alone must

do the work. The labor officials, bought body and soul by imperialist-capitalist society, would do nothing. The Left Wing alone could speak for the unskilled, for the foreign-born. The Left Wing alone knew how to carry on the struggle.

The Left Wing could carry on its program in two ways: 1. By stimulating existing unions, A. F. of L. and independent. 2. Or by itself forming its own unions and then fighting to get into the A. F. of L. In the textile industry, all the unions were weak and futile. In particular, the United Textile Workers was so weak and so rotten that the Left Wing saw that the only way to fight was to form its own organization, its "United Front Committees," and then, when it was powerful enough, to force the A. F. of L. bureaucrats to take them in. The name "United Front Committee" was chosen by the Left Wing to show that it did not intend to form another union in the textile industry and to raise the slogan of working class unity.

Finally, the Left Wing had watched the ruthless campaigns of the capitalist general staff in the textile industry for over a year. The Left Wing understood the menace. The wage cuts had to stop. It decided to take up the challenge and to take it up in Passaic.

It was quite natural that Passaic should be the battle ground. The woolen and worsted section of the textile industry is far more vulnerable to attack by the workers than the cotton section, where wage cuts first started. The mills are not spread over but are mostly in the northern and eastern part of the United States—mostly in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and centralized in Lawrence, Providence, Passaic and Philadelphia. They are therefore accessible to organizers and comparatively less difficult and dangerous to organize.

2. Passaic was the women's wear center in the country. And while it was true trade was rather dull, yet it was believed that the mills in Passaic produced such fine stuff and had such a trademark and such a market that an extended strike would hit them just as hard as if the general market were active.

3. Passaic was near New York, the liberal and labor center of the country, where powerful allies, a strong Left Wing movement and the Communist Party could be found ready to help.

4. Passaic was close to Paterson. Paterson had 30,000 textile workers. The union in Paterson was recovering from the blow given it in 1924. There was an opportunity of forming a militant group there. Besides, there were 10,000 dye workers in Paterson. No one had organized them. They too were terribly oppressed and would respond at the right time. A strike in the dye works in Paterson was like a hand at the throat of the silk manufacturers. The dye workers of Paterson dyed 85 per cent of all the silk stuff manufactured in this country. A strike there meant that eventually all the silk mills throughout the country would have to close down. Here was a chance—a chance to create a bloc between Passaic and Paterson—a bloc of 50,000 workers! This would be an excellent base for a National Textile Union and a tremendous achievement for the Left Wing.

5. But most decisive of all was the fact that the Passaic workers were ready to fight. All they needed were the leaders. To have abandoned these workers would have been the rankest betrayal, would have been to repeat the tactics of Green, Woll and Company.

So the Left Wing proceeded in its task and organization work began. In three months 1,000 workers had joined the new union, "The United Front Committee of Textile Workers of Passaic and Vicinity." The fight was on. The die was cast.

CHAPTER IV.

The Workers March Up.

"The organization of the unorganized on any considerable scale in American industry inevitably precipitates hard-fought strikes. Organization campaigns are the first phase of bitter struggles between the workers and employers over questions of wages, hours, working conditions and the right to organize. . . . This basic connection of strikes with organization movements is a foundation fact. All our strategy in the campaign to organize the unorganized turns around it." (Wm. Z. Foster: "Organize the Unorganized," T. U. E. L. Labor Herald Library, 1926).

In Passaic, strike action was soon forced upon the workers. The Botany mill owners, seeing 1,000 of their workers already in the United Front Committee, considered matters had gone far enough. They decided to provoke a premature strike, crush it ruthlessly and thus prevent any resistance or unionization for years to come. But the mill owners, with all their spy-born information, underestimated two things: 1. The militancy and stubbornness of the workers, their hatred of the present system and their courage to fight it. 2. The power of the Left Wing movement and the Communist Party and their ability to fight.

Strike strategy and tactics is a science, but a science where the scientist must be an actual leader of the masses, expressing and articulating their needs and prepared to follow his ideas to the end. Such a leader must know how to develop and train the workers for leadership. The masses are not used or manipulated by such a leader. They are really LED. Every

move they understand. Every move they follow. And as the workers understand the ability of their leader, they learn to love and to trust him more, to give him more power and co-operation. This is how a Communist leadership leads.

For three months the workers, especially the picked United Front Committee, were trained for the fight which every one knew was coming. All the tricks of the bosses, their use of force and fraud in all its variations and forms, were exposed to those local leaders on whose shoulders the actual struggle would rest.

Then, on Thursday, January 21, 1926, came the first shot. An active worker was fired from the Botany for being a member of the union. The United Front Committee met that night. The next day a committee of three went to see Vice-President Johnson and asked for the man's reinstatement. This was refused and Mr. Johnson made it plain that all union men found would also be fired. At the next meeting of the United Front Committee, it was decided to fight it out. On Monday, January 25th, a committee not of three but of forty-five went to see Johnson and not to beg for reinstatement but to present their demands which were: 1. Abolition of the 10 per cent wage cut in effect since October last. 2. Time and half for overtime. 3. No discrimination against union workers. The whole scene was carefully prepared in advance as were the demands. At a given time, all delegates stopped their machines and went from room to room, in a very impressive manner, gathering themselves together into a committee to go to see the management. All the workers quit work to see what would happen. The air was tense. Each moment was an hour.

The Committee presented their demands and found the management ruthless. All were fired and told to

leave by the front gate. Chief of Police Zober and many policemen were there to see that the workers got out quickly. But the committee had rehearsed and was prepared for the whole event. With a burst of force they flung the police aside. Into every room they scattered with a cry of STRIKE! STRIKE!

The strike was on.

Like a vast sea the workers poured out of the mill and soon a great cheering picket line was marching in front of the mill gates. The shock troops had gone into action. In two days the great Botany mill with over 5,000 workers was completely tied up.

Each day, each week, a new victory, no matter how small. That was the policy. Each day the workers must feel and see their power and strength more and more. Never for one moment must the spirit be allowed to die down. In this manner the strike in Passaic progressed in one long upward-sweeping crescendo.

The Botany Mill was not the only one that had cut wages. There was the Garfield Worsted, the Passaic Worsted Spinning Co., the Gera Mills, the N. J. Spinning Co. and others. The strike committee decided to move on these mills at once. But one by one, mill by mill, these tactics permitted the workers to see their power, and to extend and lengthen the upward wave of the strike. It also enabled the strike committee to keep its pulse on the trend of events, to test out again and again if the time was ripe to strike and how far to go.

On Wednesday, January 27th, the Garfield Worsted Mill was closed down. Saturday, January 30th, saw the Passaic Worsted Spinning Co. plant affected. By the end of the next week, February 6th, the workers of the Gera Mills too had joined the strikers, as had most of the workers in the New Jersey Spinning Co. The front troops, those whose wages had been cut,

with tremendous spirit and enthusiasm had gone into action. Larger and more determined grew the picket lines and the ranks of the strikers.

This mass picket line symbolized the force and power of the workers as nothing else could. In Passaic, as in every mass strike, it was a necessity. It disciplined the workers. It made them move together and in unison. It prevented the terror of the bosses. It stopped scabbing.

The mass picket lines were used not only in front of the Botany Mill, but in order to call out the workers in the other mills. If the United Front Committee had so desired, some workers in all the mills would have walked out on the first day. But this would have created confusion. They could not have been assimilated quickly enough. Part would have been terrorized back to work. Discouragement would have followed. The mill by mill method used demonstrated to all, not only the power, but the discipline and unity of the union. The leadership went step by step but only when the next step would succeed. The plans that had been made were very far-reaching and not a single misstep could be afforded.

At last the terrorized mill workers had found their leadership. With a fervor almost religious they threw themselves behind such a union, "their saviour." The committee would set the date. The picket line would march up to the mill in question (always at a time when the workers were working, never at a time when they were going in to work. The strike committee did not want to stop these workers from going in. They wanted to test if the workers were ready to fight and could test it out only by making the workers themselves walk out). The workers would respond to a man. Only the office help, the foremen and the superintendents would remain, literally gnashing their teeth in rage.

At the end of the second week, a halt was made. All the first line had been called out. It was time to consolidate positions won before the bosses, completely taken back by the tremendous power and daring of the union, could collect their forces and make their counter attacks. A permit was secured from the vacillating and fearful city government and the end of the second week saw a tremendous parade of all the workers on strike through the heart of the city.

It was a powerful demonstration. The slogans carried raised the enthusiasm and determination of the workers to the highest pitch, and knitted their ranks firmly together. The small storekeepers and property owners, the professional elements and liberal-minded, the petty-bourgeoisie in general moved by the slogans and the power of the workers, began to drift to their side. The bosses saw that they had provoked not a premature flare-up, but a deep struggle. They marshalled their forces and prepared for the attack.

But the Strike Committee wrested the offensive away from the bosses. It decided to mobilize its second line, the four thousand workers in the Forstmann-Huffmann mills and to extend the strike. These workers had not received any wage cuts yet. The bosses pursuing their new policy of proceeding cautiously and mill by mill in their wage cut campaign, had not yet reached the Forstmann-Huffman mills when the United Front Committee had started to organize for the fight. The mill, however, had reached that stage where it was operating on part time, to give the workers the "hunger cure," thus showing that a cut was not far off.

The question, however, was, would these workers respond? To bring them out, special demands were presented to the Forstmann-Huffmann Co. At the same time the old demands were made more aggressive. They were:

1. Not only the abolition of the wage cut but a 10 per cent increase over the old wage scale.

2. The return of the money taken from the workers by wage cuts since the time the last cuts were given.

3. Time and a half for overtime.

4. Forty-four hour week.

5. Decent sanitary working conditions.

6. No discrimination against union workers.

7. Recognition of the union.

Notice here the steady shift of the center of gravity from the question of winning certain demands to a question of organization, to winning the union. The demands must culminate in the establishment of permanency for the union. Without that any victory will be hollow.

When the workers decided to march on the Forstmann-Huffmann plant in the third week of the strike, the main question in reality had already become the recognition of the union. Now the bosses really grew alarmed. With fury they hurled their police—it was really “their” police, for the city government was in their pocket—against the workers peacefully marching on the Ackerman Ave. Bridge to the Forstmann-Huffman plant. Then the workers in Passaic began to learn what the Russian workers learned in 1905, the power and the meaning of the Czar. A frightful scene was enacted. Men, women and children were mercilessly clubbed and trampled over. The line wavered and fell back and broke.

But the Strike Committee had prepared. A real leadership suffers no illusions about “freedom,” “democracy” and the like. Such a leadership knows full well that behind the mask of “democracy” leers the features of naked dictatorship, a dictatorship fattened on the blood of the workers and stopping at nothing. To give in to the terror was out of the question. The

workers must learn to fight this terror and to understand it. For this march the whole United Front Committee had been mobilized to go in the very front ranks. They took the posts of danger. They showed they were the leaders in action.

But this was not all. The metropolitan press of New York was at hand. Here was a chance to expose this prostitute democracy. Here was a chance to open the eyes of the workers throughout the country. The papers were tipped off to be present near the bridge and to take pictures. And the reporters took pictures, horrifying pictures. The whole “humanitarian” sentimental middle-class world calling itself “public opinion” raised its voice in protest. Even the police officials were unnerved. They hesitated and broke before the wave of resentment.

Only the workers were like iron. The next day the union announced that the peaceful line would go through again. The program of the leadership had to be carried out. It was carried out. In spite of the mill owners, the police lines broke. The Forstmann-Huffman plant was picketed. The workers poured out of the plant, the more skilled workers—spinners and weavers—leading the way. By the end of the fourth week, the plant had ceased production. The second line of the proletarian army had been mobilized and had swung into action. Orderly and disciplined, the workers marched forward.

By now the mill owners had got an inkling into the plans of the United Front Committee. During the fifth week of the strike they feverishly prepared for battle. Forstmann-Huffmann mill officially closed down its plant for the purpose of spreading the propaganda that they were afraid of their lives and also in order to dilute the ranks of the strikers with workers whom they considered not yet quite ripe for militant strike action. The whole power of the local police was mobilized.

In the meantime the union further intrenched itself. It had already issued its appeal for money for relief and defense and the working class, thoroughly aroused by the general publicity given the strike, had responded generously. Relief stores were opened. Large mass meetings daily informed the workers of the situation, taught them fighting songs and led forward to the struggle.

At the same time the workers everywhere tried to isolate the mill owners from the rest of the community, and to win as many friends to their side as possible. Organizer Weisbord went before the Central Labor Union body of Passaic to present the case for the strikers and showed that the policy of the United Front Committee was not to smash the A. F. of L. but to join it. In this manner the local A. F. of L. unionists were won over, or at least neutralized, even though they understood that the fighting policies of the United Front Committee were diametrically opposed to the policies of their own officials.

A Passaic relief conference was organized and, because of the brutality of the Passaic bourgeoisie against the workers and because the low wages of the workers hurt business and the small landlords generally, the petty bourgeoisie were won over through humanitarian and business slogans. The relief conference organized the petty bourgeoisie and threw them against the Chamber of Commerce and other fascist organizations that were for the bosses.

As the mill owners were relying solely on local police at the time, an attack was made on the political officials. It was shown how frankly the mill owners controlled everything. It was shown that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Preiskel, had become rich while in office by opening up a remnant store in New York City where he received remnants from the mills. It was shown that Judge Davison in Passaic

owed his appointment directly to the mill owners (through Senator Edwards, then governor). It was shown that Mayor Burke of Garfield was working for the Botany Mills. It was shown that Judge Baker of Garfield was part of the Chamber of Commerce linked up with the mill owners.

By these exposures, terrific pressure was made to bear against the officials, the police and the mill owners. The basis was laid to win over the clergy in spite of the fact that the bosses had used the arguments from the beginning that the leaders were atheists and Communists. Even the hostile local press was put on the defensive in the face of favorable comment by part of the New York metropolitan press.

Having thus further consolidated its position locally, the Strike Committee now went further. Realizing that the only way to beat these powerful textile barons was to broaden and extend the strike to include ever and ever wider circles of workers, the United Front Committee was already planning to enter Paterson, silk center.

For this purpose, it was necessary to mobilize and throw into action the third rank of troops, the silk workers in and near Passaic. The first deployment was to call out the workers of the Dundee Textile Mill, manufacturing broad silk. It was then announced that the next march—this was in the sixth week of the strike—would be to Lodi, three miles away and partly towards Paterson—to free the more than 3,500 slaves of the United Piece Dye Works there. At the same time the United Front Committee began agitating in Paterson. The demands for the silk workers were made the same as those for the woolen and worsted workers, except that as their wages were exceptionally low, a 25 per cent increase in wages was asked for instead of the first two demands of the other workers.

The sixth week of the strike was one that the strikers will never forget. The frantic bosses were determined to stop the ever-onward march of the workers. On Monday police mounted on horses and motorcycles appeared. "Terror Week" had started, such a terror that filled all the newspapers with horrifying tales and pictures. Men, women and children were mercilessly beaten and ridden down. Tear gas bombs were thrown, and, it being winter, streams of icy water were played on them. The police were really frothing at the mouth. Drunk and mad with hate they beat down all indiscriminately, including even the reporters and photographers of the capitalist newspapers whose heads and cameras were smashed.

Through all the excitement and screams and hysterical outbursts, the picket lines stood firm as steel, orderly, disciplined, unflinching. Where the lines were clubbed, the workers would sullenly retreat, only to begin again.

By this time, larger and larger sections of the people were behind the strikers. The strike had become a scandal. Liberal people wanted to have the terror of the police stopped. The New York papers were shouting for their destroyed property and were pointing out that if the thing did not stop, more and more workers would see how little "freedom" there was in America. This was playing right into the hands of the Communists, they cried. More and more people began to take this view. The little politicians in Garfield, the Councilmen of the city were forced to take sides with the strikers. But lo and behold, the strikers found all police and judicial power was disclaimed by these very Councilmen and was in the hands of the bosses' tools, Burke and Baker. However, the vacillation of the Councilmen did result in picketing being allowed in Garfield.

At length the forces aroused proved too much for Zober and Preiskel. The cry, "Impeach Preiskel," was growing louder and louder. The officials were forced into a semblance of decency. By Thursday the picket line, singing and cheering, moved triumphantly on.

Having won in Passaic, the line moved at once on Lodi. By the end of the sixth week and the beginning of the seventh week of the strike, the strike was one hundred per cent effective there. Almost 4,000 more workers had joined the great strike.

How well the United Front Committee had calculated and how deeply it had touched the needs of the workers was seen by the fact that no sooner had the dyeworkers of the great dye works in Lodi come out than tremendous restlessness broke out in the other industries in Passaic and in the textile mills of Paterson. The climax came when fifty workers of the large National Silk Dyeing Co. in East Paterson—over four miles away—walked out. They asked for a picket line to bring out the others, when 200 more spontaneously joined the strikers.

The situation then stood as follows:

	No. employees before strike	No. employees on strike
Botany Mills Consolidated Co. (Botany Worsted and Garfield Worsted)	6,400	5,800
Passaic Worsted Spinning Co.	600	550
New Jersey Worsted Co. (N. J. Spinning Co. and Gera Mills)....	2,400	1,900
Forstmann-Huffmann Co. (Pas- saic, Clifton, Garfield Plants) ..	4,000	3,500
Dundee Textile Co.	300	280
United Piece Dye Works in Lodi..	3,500	3,000
National Silk Dyeing Co.	—	250
Totals	17,200	15,280

By this time the whole country was aroused. From all sides there came demands that the strike be settled. Under fire of such pressure, snarling and grumbling, the mill owners retreated but only to prepare for a far more bitter offensive against the workers than ever before.

The Catholic clergy raised their voice and endeavored to settle the strike. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise did likewise. But all of no avail. The mill owners were firm as adamant. The only proposals that came from them were those issued by government and other agencies which the owners controlled, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Mayor McGuire, Senator Edwards and Secretary of "Labor" Davis, all of whom told the strikers to overturn their leaders and to go back to work when bye and bye the bosses would talk to them. These strike-breaking attempts, under the guise of peace offerings, of course, were laughed at by the workers. But more and more the workers were opening their eyes to who their enemies were. They were becoming class conscious.

During the lull that followed, the United Front Committee did everything it could to put national pressure on the mill owners. The following moves were made:

1. A letter was sent by the strikers to Wm. Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, asking support for the strike, proposing unity with the A. F. of L. and demanding that the A. F. of L. proceed to organize the unorganized. The letter in part read: "The United Front Committee of Textile Workers is not a dual organization. It does not desire to set up an organization distinct and apart from the American Federation of Labor. We shall be the first to hail enthusiastically any proposal that the A. F. of L. will make to establish unity in order to combat the intolerable conditions that are forced upon the workers and to organize the industry. We pledge ourselves that if such a move is made we shall do everything in our power to achieve such unity through the American Federation of Labor."

2. The United Front Committee sent a delegation to visit the Executive Committee of the Federated Textile Unions (five independent textile unions banded loosely together) in order to join forces with them in an organization drive.

3. A letter was sent to the Associated Silk Workers' Union in Paterson stating that the time was ripe to strike for better conditions (the workers in two large dye works in Paterson had already signified their desire to walk out) and proposing that both the Associated Silk Workers and the United Front Committee join hands in a great organization campaign in Paterson.

4. Governor Moore of New Jersey was forced into the situation and attempted to mediate the strike, but the mill owners would not have him.

5. The strike even cast its shadow on the White House steps. A delegation was sent to see Coolidge but he was too busy watching Charleston dancers who had come to see him, to see the Passaic strikers. In Washington, Secretary of "Labor" Davis told them to go back to work, to which the strikers responded with spirit, "Yes, when we get a living wage and a union!"

Senator Edwards, who came to New Jersey "to investigate," saw the mill owners and their agents and departed, having "thoroughly investigated." He would not even notice the strikers. The union was forced to send a committee to Jersey City to picket his home to force him to listen to the strikers' story of the strike. But the senator, who had been heavily interested in the Forstmann-Huffmann Co. and who had received the support of the mill owners over Freling-

huysen for the senatorship, was "very busy" to see the strikers much.

However, more progressives were found who did introduce a resolution in the United States Senate calling for an investigation of the Passaic strike and the textile industry.

Thus ended the first phase of the strike. From the seventh to the eleventh week of the strike, no one knew what would happen. Everything was uncertain. Would Paterson walk out? Would a general strike be called in Passaic? Would the A. F. of L. endorse the strike and take in the strikers? Would settlement proceedings take definite form? These things we shall learn later when the mill owners begin their counter-attack.

Passaic embodied the best of the old and the new. The mass picketing, the singing, the militancy and the industrial form of organization which characterized the great strikes led by the I. W. W. in the textile industry, were used in Passaic. Together with these went the new ideas of the United Front, the flexible tactics, the establishment of connections with all labor and sympathizing elements and the constant efforts to broaden the base of support and to make room for all who really want to help.

One thing was certain. The Passaic strike was making labor history. The first round had been won by the strikers.

CHAPTER V.

The Employers' Counter.

While the union was active, the mill owners too had not been idle. They too had carefully prepared their forces. All mediation efforts were repulsed. It was now a fight to a finish. First the mill owners brought on their police. Vicious clubbings of the undaunted picket lines continued. If the workers were to be beaten at all, this symbol of power had to be destroyed. The arrest of Chief Zober and other policemen by the Civil Liberties Union for atrocious assaults did not stay the attack. Indeed, Judge Davison refused to issue any warrants for any cause against any officer during the strike. "Equality before the law"—what a mockery! The police merely laughed.

Then, as the picket lines remained firm, the police closed down the strikers' hall in Passaic and forced the strikers to meet in Garfield. At the same time, every effort was made to have the governor bring in the militia. When this failed, due to the opposition of the workers throughout the state, the fury of the mill owners knew no bounds. The picket lines must be smashed; otherwise, who knows? A general strike in Passaic or a Paterson walkout might come at any time. The police aided now by the thugs of the companies played their last cards. If they could not get a state militia, they would create a county and private militia. But the picket lines must be broken and the union put on the defensive. It was now or never.

First the union headquarters were raided on April 10th and all leaders arrested and after a most farcical arraignment on trumped-up charges of hostility to

the government, incitement to riot, etc., held under enormous bail—Weisbord alone under \$30,000.00. All the papers of the union were seized without warrant or law. (But what does the master class care for the law? The law is only the instrument of force by which the master class normally rules the oppressed workers!)

Then with the strike leaders in jail, Sheriff Morgan was called into the city of Passaic. He immediately armed his deputies and started to see to it that there were no mass picket lines in Passaic. At the same time Sheriff Nimmo was called into Garfield by Mayor "Botany" Burke. With the utmost brazenness the mill owners furnished Nimmo with deputies and in defiance of the law even paid them out of their own pockets in order to be sure to secure immediate control of them. At once Nimmo closed down the only meeting place of the strikers in Garfield, read the riot act, proclaimed "riot law" (what that was no one knew except the sheriff and he said it was something like martial law! No meetings or groupings of any kind were permitted), and broke up all picket lines, arrested many prominent New York liberals who had come to defend the civil liberties of the strikers. A real reign of terror was started.

Hand in hand with these measures the mill owners opened up their heaviest propaganda batteries. Red, White and Blue Societies distributed constitutions to hungry strikers. The Chamber of Commerce shrieked about the Communism of Weisbord and the leaders. The American Legion began to club strikers in the street and opened up its own relief store. The American Legion was going to prove it was the real friend of the strikers and not the Bolsheviks, and it announced that every striker could get food BUT on the following conditions:

1. That the striker went to church and confessed his sins.
2. That he repudiated Weisbord and the

3. That he never would go on the picket line.
4. That he would state that if he got police protection he would go back to work.

Many of the strikers were returned soldiers. To the clubs and bombs of the police, the strikers had answered with the wearing of their steel trench helmets and gas masks. They had fought the Kaiser in Germany and they were going to fight the Kaisers of America. Such workers were not afraid of the American Legion. They soon forced the American Legion to close up its store, sent a few legionnaires who were clubbing them to the hospital and made the name of the Legion a stink in the eyes of everyone in Passaic. It was called American Legion-Strike-Breaker.

From Washington Senators Edwards (Democrat) and Edge (Republican) diligently spread their lies that Weisbord had secretly received \$200,000 from Soviet Russia to stir up trouble and that all the strikers were Bolsheviks and wanted to overthrow the whole capitalist system. All this was played up, of course, by the hostile press everywhere.

From Paterson, Secretary of "Labor" McBride swore that the sanitary conditions inside the mills were excellent and that the workers were crazy to complain of such excellent treatment. Wages, said McBride unblushingly, were the highest in the world! The strike was a Communist strike and that was all.

The National Security League also appeared through its representative, O'Brien and began to raise the red flag. O'Brien collected a lot of cash for a paper to be issued for a year. He issued one paper and then quit, much to the disgust of those who had subscribed for a year and had thus been swindled. Thus does the red-baiter O'Brien operate.

But the bosses went even further than this. They got the American Federation of Labor to evade answering the letter of the United Front Committee asking for unity. Mr. Hilfers, American Federation of

Labor representative for New Jersey, eagerly acted the part of strike-breaker by announcing that the strike was lost because of the bad season.

The officials of the Federated Textile Unions had also refused to begin an organization campaign at once. And simultaneously the Associated Silk Workers of Paterson officials declared that the dye workers did not want to be organized at this time, dilly-dallied, sent committees to investigate and did all they could to offset the strike sentiment growing in Paterson. This is a particularity of the conservative trade union officials. They never display any eagerness to fight and always look for good excuses for not fighting.

To cap it all the Forstmann-Huffman Company secured the most drastic temporary restraining order (injunction) in New Jersey legal history. No one could picket or even talk about the strike or contribute any money to it. Ordinarily, to Left Wing leadership injunctions are mere scraps of paper. This injunction, however, was enforced by 700 armed men ready to shoot to kill.

To sum up, then, the mill owners had done as follows through "their" government: 1. Broken up picketing. Created a private militia of over 700 people, armed and vicious. 2. Established a reign of terror. After reducing the mass picket lines to eight at each gate of the mill, police then again and again beat up the eight sent to picket. 3. Arrested all union leaders and held them illegally under outrageous bail after farcical hearings. 4. Shut down meeting halls. 5. Wiped out all civil liberties for strikers. 6. Issued tons of propaganda from Washington, New York City, Trenton, Paterson and Passaic, calculated to hide the true issues and to put the union on the defensive. 7. Used the full powers of the courts through the use of injunctions, evictions and the criminal law against the strikers. 8. Isolated the United Front

Committee from the American Federation of Labor and all the other textile unions.

It was a regular holocaust. For the first time the union was put on the defensive. The Paterson plans were put off until they became too late to be of effect. No general strike in Passaic could be called. The bosses had secured a real victory. They had forced the strike to reach its peak weeks before the plans of the union leaders called for it. The bosses had wrested the offensive from the union and were threatening to smash the strike.

But if the idea of the enemy was to smash the strike, they failed miserably. The union had been too well entrenched. Point by point the attack of the employers was effectively countered by the strikers.

1. When the picket line had been smashed the union immediately established the "broken-field" system where groups of strikers were stationed at every corner to see to it that no scabbing took place. Besides, masses of strikers were told to take "walks" around and near the mills. Thus the mills had plenty of strikers near the gates to prevent the small picket lines from being beaten to death. Later Block Committees composed of all the active strikers of a block were created to bring every striker into full activity. Even college boys were moved to go on the picket line to expose the brutalities of the police.

2. To free the arrested leaders a huge bail fund of over \$250,000.00 was raised by organized labor in New York City. At the same time, on the initiative of the International Labor Defense, a large United Front Committee was established for the defense of the Passaic strikers. It was the first time that so many divergent organizations had united in action. Within eleven days after arrest, Weisbord and the others were let out on bail. Labor had forced the jail doors open.

3. The power of the workers secured a new meet-

ing place in Wallington and enabled the Civil Liberties Union to force Sheriff Nimmo to retire from the field and open up the halls there to the strikers. Freedom of speech and assemblage was restored to some degree. Simultaneously, Sheriff Morgan also was forced to retire.

4. So great was the back-fire of the workers, that the Forstmann-Huffmann injunction was argued in court, the judge was forced to modify it greatly to permit picketing in small numbers and to restore other civil rights.

5. Newspapers all over the country were stirred up enough so that they had to counter the poison propaganda of the bosses with the news put out by the publicity department of the Strike Committee. Articles all over the country began to appear exposing the mill owners and the local government.

6. Political parties began to see in the Passaic strike national issues. The wool tariff of 78 per cent supposed to guarantee an American standard of living, the Alien Property Custodian's return of the mills to the German owners after the war, the low wages, the brutal local government—all these things forced a hearing on the textile resolution in the U. S. Senate in Washington.

7. A National Relief Campaign was started by the General Relief Committee of the Strikers, aided by the International Workers' Aid. In almost every large city of the country, large "United Front" conferences were held for the relief of the Passaic strikers. Even the Berlin headquarters of the International Workers' Relief and the Russian Textile Workers' Union sent their greetings. Large funds kept pouring into the treasury of the textile strikers.

When A. F. of L. officials are forced to conduct strikes through the action of the masses they seldom pay any attention to the workers except to give orders to return to work. These "leaders" consider a

strike a "nasty" difficulty, which pertains only to themselves and to the employer. They try their best to stifle the fighting spirit of the workers. Their first act of war is to beg for peace, to plead that the bosses sit around the little table with them "fixing things up." No one ever really reports to the workers. The workers never appear on the scene as controlling factors at all. In fact, they seldom know what is going on. There is no attempt to create an understanding among these workers. They are used not as actors in the struggle but merely as mutes being pushed back and forth at the will of the manipulators. But the workers are beings with a fair understanding of their problems. They resent being manipulated. The result of strikes thus conducted is that within a short time the interest of the workers in the struggle vanishes and the strike dies an inglorious death.

How different was the Passaic strike! From the very beginning, every effort was made to awaken into conscious activity every stratum of the workers. The clubbings and mass picket lines did wonders to wipe out racial and religious divisions which the bosses had tried so diligently to foster. Petty jealousies were buried in the struggle. Passaic became the symbol of unity. The mass meetings and mass singing and general mass participation of the workers in the strike activities did more in a month to teach the workers English than they could have learned in a year. The strike was a method of Americanization in the proletarian sense of the world.

One of the greatest achievements of the strike leadership was the education that all sections of the workers received. The organizers were also teachers. In the eyes of the bosses, the workers after a while became "unemployables," that is, they had received such a good education that they never would be the same docile slaves as before.

From the start of the strike the union had made

special efforts to educate and awaken the women. Here some of the very best work of the union was done. The women marched shoulder to shoulder with the men on the picket line and were in the heart of all activities of the union. The strike freed the women, the worst enslaved of all. Special meetings were held for them. Their special problems were discussed. They were made to feel the breath of life that a union puts into their beings. Special clubs were formed attached to the national organization of the United Councils of Working Class Women. Not only the women strikers, but the wives of the men, were drawn into the struggle through these women's clubs. It was the women who managed the children's kitchens and did the thousand and one strike duties necessary to be performed. These "backward peasants," as the labor traitors would say, became the greatest strike enthusiasts of all.

The same good job was done to the several hundred Negroes that came out. They proved to be fine strikers and unionists.

Nor were the young workers forgotten. The A. F. of L. officials sneer at the youth. The young workers are not even taken into the unions at all, or are grossly discriminated against. But it is the youth who are starved most and exploited most in the capitalist system. A real leadership would see that the energy and ability to learn on the part of the young workers make them the very best union material. In Passaic every attention was paid to the young workers. They were assigned special jobs. They held special meetings. Their special problems were discussed and the best of union education given them. The Strike Committee took the position that no matter what happened to the strike, it was of the utmost importance to teach the youth, for with the young workers enlightened a union was bound to be formed and recognized in Passaic. The Young Workers League help-

ed tremendously here.

But what enraged the capitalists and the churches most was the fact that the union even organized the children of the strikers to defeat the bosses. The children were formed into special clubs and given special attention. In many ways the children were invaluable. They would ferret out where scabs lived and picket their homes. And many a scab quit work because his child came home with a black eye after a fight with some "Pioneers." The class struggle entered even the schools. The children demanded to know why the schools did not open up free lunch rooms for the strikers' children. At every opportunity the lies spread in the schools about the union were fought against and the truth told by the children of the strikers.

In the excellent weekly "Textile Strike Bulletin," which the Union put out, all this educational work was co-ordinated. Special columns were given over to the workers themselves and soon a whole staff of worker correspondents, men, women, and children appeared. The Bulletin was theirs and they wrote for it. Here also should be mentioned the fact that the "Daily Worker" and all of the language papers of the Workers (Communist) Party were open to the strikers. The foreign language papers were a power in educating and solidifying the masses.

The great value of all this work became immediately apparent when, during the reign of terror that put the union on the defensive, while the leaders of the union were still in jail, the Forstmann-Huffmann Co. announced that it would "open up" its plant. And the company "union," which the Forstmann-Huffmann Co. had created after the 1919 strike in order to check real unionism, began active campaigning in order to trick the workers back to work. It will be recalled that the Forstmann-Huffmann Co. had closed down its plant for one reason, that it wanted to flood

the union with weak strikers. But so well had the union done its job in educating all strikers, that in spite of everything, the ranks of the strikers held absolutely firm.

By these methods and through these forces, the union was able to withstand the strike-smashing tactics of the employers. Under bureaucratic leadership strikes usually grow old quickly. At the age of eight weeks such strikes seem to have the weariness of old age. In the Passaic strike, the energy let loose seemed to know no bounds. At the end of the twentieth week, the strike, while it had reached its peak, was as strong as ever.

The whole city felt the strength of the union. None more so than the petty-bourgeoisie, the small shopkeepers, landlords, business men, lawyers, doctors, professional men and clergy directly affected by the strike. The Protestant clergy, catering directly to the owners (most of the strikers were Catholic; the office help and native employees, Protestant) were out and out Fascist, working through one Reverend Talbott, with the Chamber of Commerce and other bosses' clubs.

The Catholic clergy and politicians were more sympathetic to the workers. Church business as well as other business was being hurt, and, what was most to be feared, the Communists were winning over "their" church people. So they made serious and conscientious attempts to settle the strike. They created a Mediation Committee, headed by Judge Cabell, which began to try to bring the workers and mill owners together.

For a time it seemed that the Mediation Committee would be successful. The mill owners, seeing their smashing campaign totally defeated, were ready to play around with the Mediation Committee for a while and use it for their own purposes. The mill owners apparently planned as follows:

1. They would try to get the Mediation Committee to send the workers back without a union or under the form of the company union in each mill. This attempt failed, however, when the union proved too strong and the strike leadership, raising the alarm, firmly explained to the workers the attempt on the part of the Catholic Mediation Committee to try to become the Strike Committee. The slogan was raised with effect that only the union could settle the strike. The Catholic Committee was made to understand that the main question had now become the recognition of the union and the mill owners would have to deal directly with the Strike Committee.

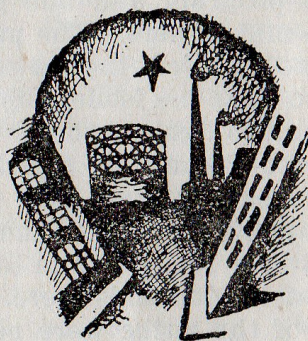
2. The mill owners thought that by playing with the Mediation Committee they could raise false hopes in the minds of the workers and then, at the psychological moment, by dismissing this Mediation Committee, so demoralize the strikers as to cause a break in the ranks.

3. The mill owners wanted to lull the union into quiet. Get the strike off the front pages of the newspapers. Be sure that the peak of the offensive had passed. At the same time, use the period to unite all the mill owners, the shaky ones with the strong ones, together. These were the tactics employed. A close unity with one program and one general staff was achieved by the mill owners. The period of the Mediation Committee enabled the powerful Forstmann-Huffmann Co. to seize the leadership from the Botany Co. and compel all to fight on to the finish.

But the Strike Committee clearly penetrated the mill owners' strategy. It won over the whole Catholic element and public opinion in the city. The union thereby showed how ready it was to settle the strike and how modest its demands were. In this manner the true issues of the strike were put forward and it was made clear how plainly and fully the responsibility for the continuance of the strike and all consequent

suffering rested on the shoulders of the employers. By the use of the Catholic committee and church support, the leaders were able to nullify the charges of atheism and communism, hurled against the leaders and the union. Later at the request of the union the priests went to Washington to ask for an investigation and, when their Mediation Committee was later slapped in the face and dismissed by the large manufacturers, the infuriated petty-bourgeoisie, clergy and politicians denounced the mill owners as Kaisers (after waiting several weeks, however, to see if it was safe), and stated they were with the union to the end. They went so far as even to state they were going to raise dollars for the strikers by the thousands, which was very good for little property holders. Indeed, this period ended with a big parade, the largest ever seen in Passaic till then, staged by the Catholic Committee for the strikers.

Thus the second phase of the strike closed in a deadlock. The union had been put on the defensive and its mass picket lines destroyed, but the ranks of the strikers had remained firm and their spirit high. A large portion of the population had been won over to the strikers' side.



CHAPTER VI.

Mobilizing the "Public."

By the end of the twentieth week of the strike it had become apparent that the Passaic strike was to go down in history as the most stubborn and bitter battle in the textile industry.

Titanic forces were wrestling with each other for the mastery. It was not only the Passaic strikers and employers who were involved. It was plain now that much more was involved. So much more was involved that behind the mill owners was all the power of the capitalists while behind the strikers the whole working class had gathered.

Already, from a national viewpoint the Passaic strike had been won. The wage cutting campaign had been definitely stopped. The restlessness of the workers in the textile mills of Lawrence, the spontaneous strikes and outbursts that took place here and there were warning the bosses that the Passaic strike had been a beacon light to the submerged and exploited masses. Further speed-ups ceased. The Passaic strikers had hurled themselves against the enemy and had checked his drives completely.

But now the Passaic strike had come to mean even more. It was not only a fight against wage cuts. It had become a fight for the recognition of the union. This was unheard of before. It stuck in the throat of the bosses. Ordinarily strikes in the textile industry of the unskilled workers had been to better conditions. But here, under the proper Left Wing leadership, through struggle, the unorganized had become ripe for organization. This was like a death knell sounding in the ears of the master class. Like a ghost,

it haunted them in their sleep and drove them frantic. The fight had to go on to a finish. The bosses launched their next assault.

The mill owners were better enabled to fight it out by virtue of several events favorable to them. First, the Paterson silk industry had slumped temporarily, thus preventing aggressive United Front Committee action in Paterson and providing some scabs for the woolen mills. Second, the woolen trade was still dull and the mills had had enormous stocks on hand. This latter fact, by the way, the union had never been able to ascertain in the beginning. Third, forty thousand members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union went on strike against their employers, thus tying up the women's wear industry completely. It was this very industry that consumed most of the products of the Passaic mills. So the Passaic employers, their market restricted, could more easily decide to fight it out.

First the Mediation Committee was dismissed as was the counter-weight "Governor Moore—A. F. of L. Hilfers—Military Generals Mediation Committee" which had been established by the mill owners to see to it that the other mediation committee did not do too much for the workers. (Notice how the A. F. of L. official Hilfers worked hand in hand all the time with the rankest enemies of labor to break the strike).

The argument first given was that on no consideration would the mill owners deal with a Communist leadership, with Weisbord. By this tactic the bosses tried to separate the workers from their leaders, thus dividing their ranks and smashing the union and the strike.

But the union took this occasion to turn the tables on their oppressors and not only eliminated the question of Weisbord but measurably strengthened its ranks. A huge mass meeting was called for the express purpose of deciding if the workers wanted Weis-

bord to remain. It was a tremendous meeting and turned out to be a great demonstration for Weisbord and a union. It was clear now that no one could take away from the workers their right to pick their leaders. Then Weisbord was called to speak. He stated that his interests were never separate and apart from the interests of the workers. The real issue was not Weisbord, he said, amid loud applause, but the recognition of the union and to prove how sincere the union was for peace he would withdraw from all settlement negotiations with the bosses; but the union never could withdraw. This meeting finally cemented workers and leaders together into unbreakable unity.

The employers, foiled in their plan, then stated that they would never deal with the Bolshevik United Front Committee. If the A. F. of L. officials had managed the strike it would have been different, but to meet with the United Front Committee? Never!

During this period of the strike the mill owners decided not to rely so exclusively on their gangsters in police uniform, but to import professional gangsters into the strike area.

The countryside was scoured for scabs. Children just let out of school were forced into the mills. Hundreds of professional strike-breakers secured by agencies in all parts of the country began to pour into the city. They did no work, drew wages two and three times what the actual workers had received and were used merely to terrorize the strikers. In certain sections of the city gangs of them, fully armed, roamed the streets. One day a striker would be shot, another day, a striker stabbed. With very few exceptions, the union organizers were beaten up. At the same time bombs began to explode all over the city with much more noise than damage. No arrests were made but immediately blame was fastened upon the strikers. Under cover of this claim of violence by the

strikers, the police made vicious assaults upon them.

The mills then hired men for the special purpose of "framing" the leaders. Such notorious spies as Nosovitsky and Spolansky were soon on the job. No doubt some of the bombing was the work of such agents.

At the same time Nosovitsky got a girl to sue Weisbord for \$50,000 as "heart balm" in a "breach of promise suit." The intention of the mill owners by this, of course, was to prove that Communists were free lovers eager to destroy the home. This propaganda was calculated to stop the relief funds coming in and to alienate public opinion from the strikers and the strikers from their leaders. But the main intention of the owners was to lay the basis for the formation of a lynching Citizens' Vigilantes Committee that would drive out the "atheistic-free-loving Communists" from the city forever.

But the union had received ample warning of this intention. In the July issue of the "Industrial Digest," a manufacturers' magazine, there had appeared an article by one John J. Leary, Jr., "Labor Expert" of the New York World. (Notice how some of the bitterest enemies of labor cloak themselves with the title of "Labor Secretary" and "Labor Expert." This seems to be another case in point). In this article, Leary wrote as follows:

"The Less Costly Method."

"It (Passaic) may decide to hasten the end (of the strike) by the united action of all elements in the community looking towards the elimination of Weisbord and the 'United Front Committee' from the picture. That would bring immediate relief and be less costly than to await the slower burning out process and all the suffering and loss in prestige and business that delay in cleaning up the mess will involve."

Here was a direct incitement to violence and the

union then knew that a Vigilantes Committee would be formed.

Sure enough such a committee was formed by the Reverend Talbott, the clerical puppet of the owners. All of the boss organizations which had functioned individually against the strikers now banded together in the Citizens' Committee. The Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club, the K. K. K., the American Legion, the Elks Club, etc., all joined the Vigilantes.

The fact that the union was able to expose the frame-up on Weisbord made no difference. Soon the Citizens' Committee, according to plan, was raising the slogan "Drive Out Weisbord and his Associates" and was mobilizing everything toward that end.

The union met this threat with all the force at its command. It announced that if the Citizens' Committee meant to use violence, responsibility for whatever might happen would be on its own head.

At this point the employers opened up a determined drive to stop the enormous relief funds that the solidarity of labor had supplied to the strikers. All sorts of rumors were spread. At this time when the workers were in a life and death struggle, the A. F. of L. officials opened fire to destroy them. In a statement spread broadcast, the A. F. of L. Executive Council denounced the strike as a Communist one and the union as a dual union. They intimated that relief funds went to pay high salaries of the leaders and said that no more money should be sent to the strike committee. Following this statement Mr. Hilfers, the A. F. of L. representative for New Jersey, again shouted that the strike was lost, all should go back to work.

Thus step by step the master class built up a campaign against the union. It is at this time that the tremendous virility and power of the workers showed themselves. Their solidarity remained unbroken. For twenty weeks, hunger and destitution had stared

them in the face but uncomplainingly they fought on.

The most intensive educational work was done by the union. The block groups or committees were changed to district membership meetings. These meetings were small meetings where all the workers could express their thoughts, solve their problems, and act accordingly. Over fifty districts were established where officers were chosen and business conducted. In this manner hundreds of workers were brought into full union activity and local leadership developed. These district meetings were real training schools for the workers. "Backward" and illiterate Polish, Hungarian or Italian peasant women would discuss and fight against such modern industrial weapons as the "Company Union." The Strike Committee was really building a union inside of a strike. Over 12,000 workers joined the union and many even paid dues steadily throughout the strike.

The center of gravity of the strike, in a measure, shifted to relief. And here the union, under the direction of Alfred Wagenknecht, and with the help of the International Workers Aid, did a complete and fine job. Relief conferences were formed in almost every city in the country. The value of these conferences were that not only did all workers get the opportunity to unite and show their solidarity in this struggle and donate funds for the strikers, but each relief conference brought home to the employers in its particular city the spirit of Passaic and the power of the Left Wing. Everywhere the workers were aroused and in many cases the relief conferences became also unionizing conferences. The collection of funds became the means of organizing the resistance of the workers.

In Passaic a national relief conference was held where over 200 delegates representing 500,000 workers, took back with them the lessons of the strike, the necessity for organizing the unorganized and forming

a united front of the workers. In New York City a similar "united front" conference was established which did a great deal of work in collecting funds. At one relief demonstration alone about twenty-five thousand people attended.

At the time of this writing almost a half million dollars had been collected throughout the country for the relief of the Passaic strikers. About six million loaves of bread and six million pounds of assorted food stuffs had been consumed by the strikers. Four food stores were running full time. Fuel was furnished free. Union doctors tended the sick. Very bad cases were sent to clinics and hospitals. Five picket line coffee and sandwich stations were established. Also one clothing store, one barber shop, one shoe repair shop, two children's kitchens, and a playground were operated.

All of the relief work was done by the strikers themselves, hundreds of them being enlisted in the work as volunteers. It was a remarkable bit of self organization work. Even the capitalist magazine, the "Journal of Commerce and Finance" had to publish an article extolling the honesty and efficiency of the relief system established. In many strikes the relief department is separate and apart from the fight itself. Relief is given much more like charity than anything else. In this strike the relief machinery was the very tissue of the struggle. Not charity but solidarity was the slogan and everywhere in the stores and in the kitchens fighting slogans urged the workers on.

The union, in the face of the bitter attack of the bosses, intensified its relief distributing work. It opened up a great playground for the children and sent many of them to summer camps and to the homes of the many sympathizers who were glad to care for them. At these camps and playgrounds the children were taught the lessons of the strike and the meaning of the union, through games and songs

under the direction of the "Pioneers." More than anything else, this playground and camp work infuriated boss, church and state. They saw, in front of their very eyes, the union training their future slaves to abolish their slavery. So well did the children learn their lessons, that when some of them were sent for a vacation to Perth Amboy, a neighboring city where a strike broke out, the children insisted on leading the picket line and helped to make the A. F. of L. conducted strike there more militant.

Besides intensifying its educational and relief work, the union began again to connect itself with the other textile unions. The independent group of unions (the Federated Textile Unions) again was approached. The Federated endorsed the strike and pledged its aid. Further, the Federated, while rejecting a plan for forming an organization committee, declared itself sympathetic to an amalgamation of all unions in the textile industry. The Left Wing program was beginning to have telling effect.

At the same time, every effort was made to get into the American Federation of Labor. Here is where the leadership showed how correct was the Left Wing policy, which insisted that there be not the division of the workers, but unity, the United Front. The Passaic strike was illustrating more and more clearly that not the Communists, but Green and his reactionary colleagues in the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, were against the betterment of the workers, were against workers' trade union unity.

When the A. F. of L. sent its strike-breaking letter denouncing the union, a cry of indignation burst forth all over the country. Periodicals such as the Seattle Union Record and the Labor Age began to denounce the A. F. of L. officialdom for its reactionary attitude. Even capitalist sheets took notice of the scandal. The relief conferences throughout the country began an active opposition to the A. F. of L.

officials. In many cities, the local unions, Central Labor Unions, and even high district bodies voted to give funds to the Passaic strikers in spite of Green's letter.

Taking advantage of this storm that was brewing inside the A. F. of L., the United Front Committee sent another letter to the American Federation of Labor Executive Council exposing its strike-breaking tactics, but again asking to join the Federation. In the meantime, the United Front Committee had interested Senator Borah in the idea of settling the great Passaic strike. Borah saw that the strike might be settled if the A. F. of L. took the strikers and so he added his influence to the attempt to get the strikers into the A. F. of L.

This proved too much. Exposed as traitors and harassed by the growing Left Wing, a Left Wing that had won the great furriers' strike, the officialdom had to yield. As the organ of the National Association of Manufacturers put it, "IN SELF DEFENSE," the American Federation of Labor had to extend its organizing efforts. The A. F. of L. officials were like puppies grabbed by the neck and shaken. They were literally forced to affiliate the strikers and take over the strike.

Even here they showed their friendship with the enemy. They demanded—mind you, "labor leaders" demanded, not the employers—that Weisbord and the other leaders who had organized the strike must be eliminated as the condition by which they would take over the situation. Could there be worse treachery? The first act of the A. F. of L. leadership in the strike was a vicious stab at the men most hated by the bosses. The A. F. of L. leaders knew they themselves could never have conducted a strike like that in Passaic. They knew they had abandoned these very workers whom the Left Wing had now organized. They knew that to deprive the strikers of their old

leaders was an attempt at strike-breaking. They further knew how the workers hated them. And with all the venom they possessed, they determined to smash this leadership even though it may break the strike.

The strike leaders were not dismayed at this turn of events. They knew that long ago the A. F. of L. officials had declared war on the Left Wing and on all militant fighters. Here was only another form of the expulsion policy by which the militant fighters had been thrown out of the unions by the labor bureaucrats.

In fact, the strike leaders had anticipated this very thing. Weisbord had declared again and again that he was willing to withdraw in the interest of settlement. The union had become so strong that, once it secured settlement or affiliation it could carry on without him. So the United Front Committee declared it was ready to accept even the humiliating conditions laid down in order to affiliate. This forced the hand of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy. They were compelled to take in the strikers.

At a moving demonstration, with tears in their eyes and gifts in their hands, the strikers sent off Weisbord.

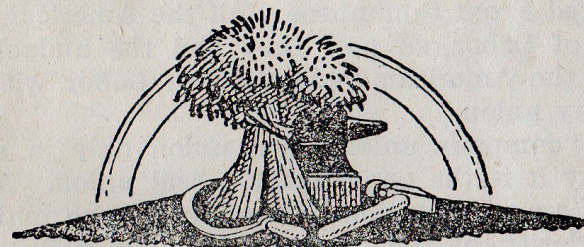
A great victory had been won. After eight months of struggle, the strikers had proven to the world that they were so strong as to force the American Federation of Labor reactionaries to make a complete somersault. Only a short time after Hilfers had declared the strike was lost, the solidarity of the workers had made him say the strike was won!

The victory that the strikers had won in forcing the A. F. of L. into the situation had immediately a large effect. In the first place the issue of Communism was killed. The Citizen's Committee at once collapsed. In the second place, the mill owners now were entirely isolated. No one could be found to support them. They were alone, at last forced to face

the real issues of the strike, the wage cuts and the right to organize. The entire city supported the union. Throughout the country denunciations of the mill owners for continuing the strike came from all classes of people. Borah even threatened to make a campaign against the mill owners if they did not live up to their promise, which they had given him, to settle the strike with the A. F. of L.

But further than this, there was the effect on the workers. These workers, hitherto ignored and attacked, were now officially part of the main stream of the American labor movement. The strikers had won a recognized standing in the labor movement. With increasing confidence and steadiness, the workers, with ranks unbroken, prepared to fight on to the end.

Thus, the end of the eight months of the struggle saw the workers far more unionized than ever before and in the best of strategic positions. The mill owners had been entirely isolated. Even the local press could not support them. Their last and most desperate campaign, that of the Citizens' Committee, had completely broken down. Financially, they had been losing heavily. The workers, on the other hand, had gathered round themselves the greatest of moral forces. They now were part of the American Federation of Labor. Their ranks were solid and firm. They were ready to advance.



CHAPTER VII.

Further Events.

The time was now ripe for the union again to take the offensive. The conservative name of the American Federation of Labor now shielded the workers from the sort of attacks that had previously been made on them both by the bosses and by the reactionary officials of the A. F. of L. Everything was ready for such an offensive. But no offensive came. For three weeks, not a soul was sent into the strike area by the United Textile Workers, the A. F. of L. textile union. Funds rapidly diminished. The morale of the workers grew lower. The bosses were allowed to take the offensive again. Nothing, absolutely nothing, was done. This marvelous strike had to continue and did continue without a leader!

With the union inactive, the mill owners repudiated all of their promises to settle with the United Textile Workers. No, the textile industry could not become organized. That would mean such a victory for the Left Wing and the launching of such unionization campaigns as would eventually break the very necks of the exploiters. Just as the bosses had countered the United Front Committee with the American Federation of Labor, so now they had the audacity to counter the American Federation of Labor with the "company union."

The "company union" is a union only in name. In reality it is the opposite of a real union. A real union is an organization of the workers to maintain the solidarity of the workers in their daily fights against the bosses. "The company union," on the

other hand, is an organization of spies and suckers to make conditions worse and to break up the solidarity of the workers. The spirit of unionism has grown so strong and the necessity for organization so great, that the only thing for the employers to do is to cater to that spirit and need on the part of the workers. The "company union" is also an admission that the workers should be dealt with collectively, and that individually the workers have no chance to win against their masters.

The "company unions" are a sign of the great fear of the bosses. "Company unions" are usually formed when a strike or a union organization drive has shown the employer he must use a finer and more subtle system of espionage and oppression if he is to continue to crush his workers. The "company union" is formed to enable the mill owners to control the workers better and to stave off real unionism.

Through the breakdown of the company union, which happens when the worker finds that such a union can do nothing real or permanent for him, the worker is prepared to enter a real union, a union that will fight for him. The worker, through participation in the "company union," has now learned the difference between real and sham unionism. In Passaic, for example, it was no accident that some of the best strikers were those from the Forstmann-Huffmann mill.

The mill owners do not establish such "unions" in every mill. Usually one mill in a given locality has a "company union." This "company union" becomes the watchdog for the bosses in the whole district. It not only prevents unionization in its own mill, but actively fights any unionization in the other mills in that particular district.

In Passaic, the watchdog "company union" had existed in the Forstmann-Huffmann plant. It had long ago been exposed during the strike. It had but

"advisory" power, was packed with agents of the management, and in seven years had done absolutely nothing permanent for the workers. In its old form, the "company union" could not be used to counter the A. F. of L. A new form had to be devised.

With an elaborate ceremony, the Forstmann-Huffmann Co. announced that if the workers would come back, the "company union" would be entirely remodeled in the interests of "democracy." There would be real elections now. Only workers could be delegates. If there was any dispute, the matter could be left to an arbitration commission of three to be selected by both the workers and the employers. If there was still no agreement on the matter in question both sides could go to such "impartial" persons as Secretary of Labor Davis. With such new features, the "company union" began to bear a very striking resemblance to some of the A. F. of L. unions. And the bosses hoped by this bold stroke to stampede the workers back to work.

But the workers had had a pretty good education by now. They knew by this time the "impartiality" of such people as Secretary of Labor Davis. But they were anxiously asking why did not the A. F. of L. do something? Why was not some one sent in to replace the old leadership? After three weeks of waiting, finally, the officials of the United Textile Workers condescended to come down to Passaic and march with the strikers in a parade. In his very first speech, at a mass meeting following this parade, President McMahon of the U. T. W., dared to exhort the strikers to wipe out completely the influence of the old leaders. He did all in his power to break the spirit and morale of the strikers. Although, through the efforts of the old leadership, over 10,000 workers had joined the United Textile Workers, this powerful body was left to rot in inaction.

But in spite of everything, the Passaic strike was

still strong and virile. The red, rich blood still coursed through its veins. The strikers refused to be defeated. The Left Wing, through its general relief committee, still poured in money to keep up the relief. And the labor fakers saw that in spite of their statement that they would not be responsible for getting relief for the strikers, the strike was not dead and they would be really forced to take it over. The workers were putting the fakers in a more and more difficult position. Newspapers were commenting on the difference between the old leadership and the A. F. of L. leadership. The strike had been too much in the public eye. The officials had to go forward.

But again the mill owners seized the offensive. Suddenly a new series of bomb explosions shook the city. And this time, the police began wholesale arrests of strikers, and, in another effort to force the workers back to the mills, instituted a further reign of terror. The strikers arrested were beaten up in the most brutal manner and confessions extorted from them by grilling third degree methods. They were held in about \$450,000 bail. Up to that time already there had been almost eight hundred strikers arrested with a total bail of nearly \$150,000. Of course, no one could meet this new bail and those arrested were forced to remain in jail.

What was worse, the U. T. W. officials still did nothing. There was no vigorous counter-attack. No exposures of the officials and spirited defense of those framed up. But the strikers still hold firm.

It is now the 37th week of the strike. The strike is not ended. The American Federation of Labor Convention has met in Detroit. Very late though, yet it decided to support the strike materially. But the workers in Passaic have learned their lessons. The A. F. of L. must prove its good. The strikers are ready with a desperate courage to fight on to the end.

CHAPTER VIII.

Passaic—A Left Wing Victory

In the meantime, whatever the outcome of the strike may be, certain conclusions can already be established. One conclusion is that the Passaic strike is a great victory for the Left Wing. It has shown that the policies and the tactics of the Left Wing are correct. The red banner of the class struggle again has been unfurled and spread to the breeze. The wage-cutting campaign has been definitely stopped. A smashing blow has been given to the "company union." "In Self Defense" the A. F. of L. reactionaries have been forced to begin to organize the unorganized and take in masses of unskilled foreign-born workers into their unions. The United Front of the workers has become the slogan and ideal which is driving the reactionaries more and more to move aside craft barriers that have hitherto made the workers impotent. The Left Wing, through the Passaic strike, has forced the bureaucrats into action against the bosses.

Passaic means organization of the unorganized. It means amalgamation, trade union unity, the united front of the workers against the united front of the bosses. It means the class struggle. It means war on the bureaucrats in the unions that help the bosses crush the workers.